University of Salford
MANCHESTER

Integration up North Research: Interim Briefing Note

January 2015

Introduction

The purpose of this interim briefing note is to provide a synopsis of progress to date and to present key emerging themes and findings arising from the research component of the Integration up North project. A brief background and overview of the project is presented to contextualise some logistical challenges and solutions regarding accessing respondents. The report summarises key issues raised in the literature and concludes by highlighting future priorities within the scope of the project overall.

Background/scope

There is a gap in the literature regarding the settlement and integration experiences of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) living in the UK. This omission also reflects the lack of policy focus on TCNs. Significantly too; there is a lack of qualitative data on integration experiences. This study attempts to fill these important gaps. It aims to capture a range of lived experiences of integration across demographic characteristics.

The overarching aims of the research are to gain knowledge of the settlement and integration experiences of migrants arriving to the UK from non-EU countries, and how settlement and integration are experienced differently according to gender,

status, vulnerability and 'type' of migration. The aims are supported by a series of related objectives as follows:

1. Gathering evidence on which activities, interventions, stakeholders and relationships assist in a positive settlement experience.

2. Capturing the role of employers in the settlement and integration of non-EU migrants.

3. Exploring the nature of social relations between new migrants and local community members from a variety of backgrounds.

4. Considering how local authorities and other services can potentially enhance positive experiences of settlement and integration by non-EU nationals in the UK.

Methodology

The research is underpinned by a qualitative methodology utilising two stage semi- structured interviews with three categories of TCNs: Highly Skilled Migrants (HSM), Family Joiners (FJ) and former long-term asylum seekers subject to case resolution (CR). The reasons for the focus on these categories of migrants are summarised briefly below:

Highly Skilled Migrants: Highly skilled workers fill skills gaps in the UK workforce and are a key component in ensuring economic growth in the UK. The retention, and recruitment of high quality highly skilled workers can be threatened by poor experiences of settlement and a lack of integration within the UK.

- **Family Joiners:** A range of people arrive in the UK from non EU countries to re-join their family members who have migrated to the UK. Arrivals may arrive with low levels of English language ability and may not have connections with other people, other than those who are already in the UK. Many such individuals, who are often women, reside in isolation and experience potential exclusion.

- **Case Resolution:** Some people who travelled to the UK to seek asylum from non EU countries prior to 2007 have had their immigration status ratified by the case resolution (CR) process set up by the Home Office. These migrants' experiences of exclusion and integration may differ pre and post case resolution.

The sample

A scoping paper, finalised in September 2014, drew on a variety of sources which indicated that a significant proportion of TCNs in Yorkshire and Humber were likely to be skilled personnel entering the UK on (Tier 2) work visas to the region to take up employment in the following sectors: sports; medicine; care home industry; high tech manufacturing; teaching; catering trade; religious instruction; and food processing. The most common countries of origin were identified as: Pakistan, India, People's Republic of China, Nigeria and Iran. Non EU family migration has been steadily increasing since the 1990s and family joiners are predominantly female. The scoping paper also identified that family joiners were most likely to come from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and the USA, although family joiners from Pakistan and India comprised the largest cohorts.

Logistics and challenges in accessing respondents

We experienced significant challenges in identifying highly skilled migrants within Yorkshire and Humber to invite to take part in the research. Although a large number of organisations were contacted (over 100), this yielded very little direct contact with migrants themselves. Instead contact was made with gatekeepers (usually in the form of Human Resource departments) who were seemingly not motivated to pursue responses from their staff. Similarly, others indicated that few TCNs were employed by their organisation or there appeared to be suspicion from employers regarding the nature of the research. The project team also attempted to draw upon personal and professional contacts and social media, again with limited success. For pragmatic reasons therefore, the project team adjusted the geographical and temporal parameters of the research to include the Greater Manchester area and also the length of time that TCNs had been in the UK.

Progress to date

To date we have conducted 26 interviews with TCN: 24 Family Joiners & 2 Highly Skilled Migrants. For the purpose of this interim briefing note, and given that the majority of the interviews conducted so far have been with family joiners, we only present the key findings and themes to emerge from this particular cohort.

The family joiners who participated in the research (n = 24) were from Pakistan (n= 17), India (n=4), Indonesia (n=1), Syria (n=1) and Guinea (n=1). Participants had been in the UK for a period between 3 months to 9 years. Interviews took place in Bradford (n=15), Leeds (n=9). All of the interviewees were women. Approximately half of the family joiners interviewed had limited English skills.

Emerging issues and findings:

Since the project is a work in progress, the findings presented below are our initial and very early reflections on the data being generated. Refined analysis and further data collection will form the basis of the final report. As such, these preliminary findings are not definitive in any way and may be superseded by subsequent evidence later in the research.

Key lessons from the literature

- The integration of TCNs has been high on policy agendas in the EU for the last ten years (Urth, 2005) and in the UK, 'super-diversity' and the politicisation of migration has facilitated an increase in interest in migrant settlement (Phillimore (2010). Migration has also become a security issue in Western Europe and the European integration process is implicated in it (Huysmans, 2000).

- Many South Asian Muslims have a strong British identity and confidence in mainstream institutions and government and also are committed to being part of the larger British community (Maxwell, 2006).

- However, discrimination presents a significant barrier to integration in the UK (Maxwell, 2006; 2009) and Islamophobia has also been identified as a limitation to the successful implementation of integration policy (Joppke, 2009).

- While integrated groups in the UK have greater capacity to interact with the mainstream

(Maxwell, 2006), there are differences in the migration experiences across generations (Portes et al, 2005). First generation migrants have higher levels of satisfaction regarding integration experiences, partly due to having lower expectations (Maxwell, 2010)

- English language ability is necessary for integration, but is not alone sufficient for social and cultural assimilation (Akresh et al.,2014)

Preliminary findings from the interviews

- Upon reflecting upon their previous experiences in their country of origin the respondents arriving from South Asian countries (i.e. Pakistan and India) were characterised as traditional and patriarchal. When in these countries, in larger urban areas, women engage in paid work and go out alone, while in more rural areas it is far less common for women to work outside the family home and other freedoms are limited.

- Many respondents felt that they experienced greater freedom in the UK in terms of employment opportunities, their families, being able to exercise independence and they perceived there to be more gender and social equality in the UK and therefore more opportunities both for women and men.

- However, a significant proportion of South Asian family joiners had moved from their country of origin to be with a British man with Asian heritage as part of an arranged marriage. Within this relationship a number of the women interviewed had experienced domestic abuse and it was suggested that sometimes being part of an arranged marriage and constraints placed upon women's lives made dealing with this more difficult. Their experiences suggested that once in the UK their roles were often limited to servicing the needs of the extended family, which also compromised their ability to access networks outside of the family.

- Unsurprisingly, family joiners reported that they had moved to their city of residence in the UK because of family connections there. Having established communities in particular areas also seemed to be a factor. The extended family was often drawn upon as the main source of support and information once in the UK: the husbands and often their own. Other social contact tended to be with women from the same ethnic background who they meet outside the family at ESOL/Life in the UK classes.

- Protection by law appeared to be significant positive benefit to the lives of all South Asian family joiners interviewed. Similarly, having financial support from the welfare state, and other support from voluntary sector organisations were also highlighted as being important to positive experiences of settlement in the UK.

- There was recognition among all respondents that learning and speaking English were key factors in fully participating in life in the UK and to enabling integration. There were strong feelings of wanting to be 'good citizens' and 'good Muslims' among the women. Family joiners suggested that additional help and practical advice and information on arrival to the UK would help (for example, how to register with a GP; how to find accommodation and access amenities; and, how to acquire citizenship).

- All participants expressed a desire to stay in the UK and, more specifically, the place they currently live- long term. No one planned or wanted to return to their country of origin on a permanent basis.

Summary

It is important to note that the findings presented here are from a specific cohort of migrants, female family joiners from South East Asia. It is also significant that many of these women's initial experiences of settlement and integration were shaped by migrating from traditional and patriarchal societies and coming to the UK for an arranged marriage. Such factors in several cases curtailed women's freedom and agency once in the UK. From the findings to date, the women interviewed indicated an attachment to the UK, expressed confidence in mainstream institutions and recognised the importance of speaking English while living in the UK. All of the women expressed a wish to remain in the UK on a permanent basis and were generally positive about the increased opportunities for exercising freedom and accessing employment. However, some women's freedom was curtailed by constraints placed upon them by their extended families and this could be construed as potentially compromising their ability to integrate and bridge to other ethnic and social groups. On the other hand, the presence of extended family in specific locales could also be positive and facilitate feelings of belonging and provide support. It was suggested by several women that more information regarding navigating systems would be helpful and would facilitate their sense of belonging and ability to engage in mainstream UK society.

Future priorities

The first phase of interviewing will be complete by the end of January 2015 and we are aiming for an additional 15 interviews with HSM and 15 interviews with CR. Each respondent who has participated in the research will be invited to take part in a second interview between March and April 2015 to further explore their experiences of integration. In addition, a small sub sample will also be invited to take part in recording their integration experiences by taking images of their localities and important factors in their settlement in the UK. A full final report will be available in June 2015.

The authors welcome comments on the contents of this briefing note.

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